UNC Charlotte and Catawba County Establish Environmental Research Collaboration

CHARLOTTE – Jan. 19, 2010 – The Chancellor of UNC Charlotte Philip L. Dubois and the Catawba County Board of Commissioners signed a memorandum of understanding for collaboration on environmental and energy research at the Jan. 19 meeting of the Catawba County Board of Commissioners.

The memorandum sets the stage for UNC Charlotte researchers from three applied research centers at the Charlotte Research Institute to install instrumentation and conduct experiments at the Catawba Eco-Complex. This effort is an expansion of innovative waste reduction and waste processing technology demonstrations already underway at the Catawba Eco-Complex.

While providing space for installation of equipment from the University and utilities, the Eco-Complex also will supply the raw waste materials needed for testing new technologies. The first experiments are planned for spring of 2010.

Researchers from the Energy Production and Infrastructure Center (EPIC) will test technologies such as alternative means of generating energy and fuels from waste products.

Infrastructure Design, Environment and Sustainability (IDEAS) Center researchers will test sustainable waste reduction and waste processing techniques. Tests will include recycling, digestion of food wastes for methane production, novel uses of glycerol wastes from biodiesel production, and synergistic operations in which waste products are consumed in other productive operations.

The North Carolina Motorsports and Automotive Research Center (NC MARC) will test emission reduction technologies.

In collaboration with the Catawba Eco-Complex, the first experiments will be led by UNC Charlotte Assistant Professor and biologist Matt Parrow and Mechanical Engineering Assistant Professor Gloria Elliott. Parrow and Elliott are developing innovative techniques for environmental-friendly, sustainable transformation of waste paper products and plant biomass from agriculture and lumber mills into a marketable liquid fuel commodity.

Work on the projects will be conducted at UNC Charlotte and pilot-scale testing will occur at the Catawba Eco-Complex. Currently funded by the Biofuels Center of North Carolina, the research findings will have positive economic implications locally and perhaps nationally, according to the Charlotte Research Institute.

About UNC Charlotte

UNC Charlotte is North Carolina's urban research institution. With an enrollment ranking it fourth among the 17 schools in the UNC system, it is the largest public university in the greater Charlotte metropolitan region. A doctoral institution, UNC Charlotte serves the region through applied research, knowledge transfer and engaged community service. For fall 2009, approximately 24,700 students, including 5,300 graduate students, were enrolled in one of the University's comprehensive doctoral, master's or bachelor's programs. Follow us on the Web at www.uncc.edu, through Facebook at www.facebook.com/UNCCharlotte, Twitter at UNCCLT_News and our blog at http://uncccltnews.blogspot.com/.

About the Charlotte Research Institute

The Charlotte Research Institute is the portal for business-university partnerships at UNC Charlotte. CRI includes a number of multidisciplinary research centers and The Ben Craig Center, a business incubator. CRI supports new research ventures, partnerships with regional and national enterprises, and spin-off companies created from UNC Charlotte research results. The centers focus on Energy Production and Infrastructure, Precision Metrology, eBusiness Technology, Optoelectronics and Optical Communications, Nanoscale Science, Visualization, Infrastructure Design Environment and Sustainability, Motorsports and Automotive Research Engineering, Bioinformatics, Life Sciences and Biomedical Engineering Systems. Follow us on the Web at http://www.CharlotteResearchInstitute.com.

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